** ***The Uniting Church in Australia***

***Synod of Queensland***

**Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee**

**Report of Meeting 3rd February 2011**

 **WELCOME & OPENING** The Moderator welcomed all to the Meeting and led us in prayers

**PRESENT:** Bruce Johnson [Moderator], John Agnew, Heather Griffin, Ray Richmond, Jock Dunbar, Neil Ballment, Anne Hulbert, Don Whebell [Secretary].

**APOLOGIES:** Dorothy Demack, David Kim.

**PRAYER POINTS:** The Moderator expressed our prayerful sympathy to Heather on the passing of her mother and advised us that Alan Demack was in the Wesley Hospital for major surgery.

**ECUMENICAL CATCHUPS:**

* Following the devastating floods, a richly appropriate Ecumenical Service was held in St Stephen’s Cathedral, involving the leaders of the Churches. The Lord Mayor and the Governor were present, as was the Premier, who offered a very fitting Reflection. She spoke of ‘towns that have become communities’, paid tribute to the magnificent efforts by volunteers and expressed her concern for long-term support for people who have suffered devastating losses in the floods.
* Heather reported that the NSW Synod has appointed Revd Stephen Robinson as Disaster Response Co-ordinator, offering workshops to help people cope with disasters. The workshops are ecumenical and deal with issues such as community, self-care and health issues.
* John reported that Toowoomba Churches Together is discussing possibilities re a successor to Revd Fr Brian Sparksman, who for some years has been a vey effective ecumenical officer for the Catholic Church on The Downs. He has been widely and warmly appreciated.

The ACU has been putting together a course for ecumenical leaders

* John also reported that the annual Ecumenical Leaders’ Retreat will be held at the James Byrne Centre, Highfields. John and Don will among the participants.
* Neil reported that his son Scott’s Induction at Barcaldine was highlighted by the strong ecumenical participation in the Service, reflecting the ecumenical spirit common in rural areas.

Bruce is moving to ensure that long-term recovery-support be strongly ecumenical.

**FROM DECEMBER 2010 MEETING:**

***Any further discussion on the following?***

**QCT Mandate for Chaplaincy in State Schools:** Glenine presented the Mandate for discussion:

**Commission for Religious Education and Chaplaincy**

**In State Schools**

 The QCT Commission for Religious Education and Chaplaincy in State Schools acts as an advocate for Religious Education [RE] and chaplaincy in state schools by:

1. promoting state School REC and chaplaincy among members of QCT and the wider community;
2. facilitating dialogue between Members of QCT and other churches, as well as with interdenominational agencies and Education Queensland, in order to promote the highest standards in RE and chaplaincy id state schools;
3. co-ordinating the engagement of Members of QCT with issues of RE and chaplaincy in state schools;
4. encouraging and enabling Members of QCT to be advocates for state school RE and chaplaincy among their own members.

**This statement of mandate was confirmed by the Executive of QCT on 28 July 2010.**

The Queensland Government’s Religious Education Advisory Committee [REAC] has Anglican and Catholic members on it to assist in giving advice to the Director-General of Education Queensland. They are the employing authority for RE. The department is writing a new handbook for RE in state schools.

 The QCT Commission has members from the Anglican, Catholic and Lutheran Churches, but nobody yet from the Uniting Church. **Anne and Bruce will discuss this.**

Garth gave some interesting and valuable background history about RE in Queensland and his work with the REAC in its early life.

Our discussion ranged across the field of chaplaincy and RE in state schools.

***An e-mail was received from Glenine Hamlyn, [General Secretary of QCT] asking that we nominate a UCA person to the QCT Commission***

***We identified three people for Bruce to contact.***

**BUSINESS:**

1. ***SUCCESSION PLANNING’:*** Members were asked to contact Bruce with names to suggest for the position[s] of Secretary for the SERC and SIRC.

***Names were given to Bruce for follow-up.***

1. **CONVERSATION ON *EPISKOPE:***

Our last full discussion on this was at the June 2008 Meeting. ‘Episkope’ was the theme of the 2008 Christian Unity Working Group Conference. The Draft Minutes were circulated to SERC members after the Conference. A complete Report of the discussion will be circulated as soon as it arrives.

***Members may have noted in the Minutes of the CUWG’s May meeting [p1 re ‘Trilateral Responses Draft 6, that a 7th Draft is being written by Robert Gribben]***

 ***I collated the papers that I have and sent them to SERC members after the Meeting.***

 ***This item will remain on our Agenda until we receive and discuss the Draft from the Christian Unity Working Group.***

 ***Sandy Yule reported that Robert has been overseas and the Draft he is working on should be ready soon. He commended our keeping this on our Agenda so that it will receive our attention. CUWG will be very interested to receive our comments.***

 ***On the 3rd January, Robert Gribben sent an e-mail which included the following paragraph:***

It is true that the next draft on Episkope/episcopacy is in my hands.  At the moment, the dismaying response of the Anglican General Synod to the long-studied, carefully-produced mutual Covenant is occupying my spare time, because CUWG has asked me to draft a response to the Primate. That is a delicate matter!  We are all aware, of course, of the likely impact of any proposal for episcopacy in the Uniting Church, but I believe the matter must be faced, or else we narrow our ecumenical vision to a bit of cooperation between the last remaining Protestants (over irrelevant 16th C arguments).  Progress depends not only on what we put to our church, but when we put it. That means that draft 7 is not going to come soon, though I hope I can get it to discussion stage sometime this year.

 ***We agreed to leave this on the Agenda awaiting further information.***

1. ***EXTENDED SERC MEETING:***

At the October 2011 Meeting, we agreed that an Extended Meeting of the SERC be planned each year, when Presbytery Ministers and other leaders are together for meetings at the UC Centre. It was felt that the great values of the meeting are in its opportunities for sharing the stories of ecumenical activity at various levels and the raising of questions to explore further.

The key question for the next Extended Meeting would be; ***‘what do we want see achieved ecumenically in the State over the next 18 months?’***

Bruce advised that the date we had set in consultation with the Presbytery Ministers and other leaders – 17th February - will not be possible as it clashes with other meetings. ***We will decide on this at our February Meeting.***

On 15th January 2011 I sent this e-mail to SERC Members:

**From:** Don Whebell [mailto:donwheb@dovenetq.net.au]
**Sent:** Saturday, 15 January 2011 4:35 PM
**To:** Don Whebell (donwheb@dovenetq.net.au)
**Subject:** SERC Extended Meeting 2011

**Greetings all**

**Many of you will recall that there was to have been an Extended Meeting of the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee on 17th February. As this clashes with other meetings, we have had to postpone it. Apologies for the oversight in arranging the meeting!**

**The SERC meets on 2nd February and will try to set another date. And hopefully choose one that won’t clash with others!**

**The Extended Meeting last year was a helpful opportunity for Presbytery Ministers and other leaders in the Synod to share stories of ecumenical activities in their areas – both the positive things that have happened and the challenges encountered. We also see the Extended Meeting as an opportunity for the SERC to do some visioning and planning for its work in the Synod. For this Year’s Meeting, we would also like to have some discussion of recent ecumenical documents, such as *Living Church in Rural Queensland, A Covenant of Association* [Anglican – Uniting Working Paper] *The Mission of the Church* [Catholic-Uniting Dialogue Report]**

**We should try to arrange the date of the Meeting for a time when the Presbytery Ministers are in Brisbane for other meetings.**

**Grace and peace**

**Don**

Suggestions from August 2010 Meeting:

* Re-visit the 2004 NCCA Covenants, with reports of any local responses to it. The study kit written by Rockhampton Churches Together continues to be a useful resource and is available from QCT. It is used in the Ecumenism part of the Basis of Union Course at Trinity College. Perhaps it could be used at a meeting.
* A presentation on the new document *Living Church in Rural Queensland.*

* I suggest the following be the program, which we’ll finalise at the meeting:

**9.30am Opening Prayer**

**9.35am Outline of the purpose of the Gathering**

**9.40am Sharing stories of ecumenical activities currently happening**

**9.45am Exploring the Working Paper: *Living Church in Rural Queensland***

[Attached to e-mail inviting people to the Gathering]

**10.45am Coffee break**

**11.15am Overview of Dialogues with the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches**

[Website addresses given prior to the Gathering]

 **12.30pm Lunch**

  **1.30pm** **Question from the SERC:**

**2.30pm Finish**

**This is from Bruce Johnson’s Introduction to last year’s Gathering:**

“The purpose of our meeting today is:

* to take time to get a snapshot of what is already happening;
* identify the areas of difficulty and impediments to ongoing ecumenism;
* provide some wisdom about how more might be achieved locally, regionally and nationally.”

***We will need to have further discussion on this at our next meeting***

1. ***QUEENSLAND CHURCHES TOGETHER:***

* QCT has been advised that Bruce and Anne be our representatives on the QCT Executive.
* We need to find some alternate members for meetings.

* Andrew Gunton has been appointed Presbytery Minister for Moreton Rivers and will need to withdraw from his position on the Faith and Unity Commission of QCT.

***Jock offered to attend Commission meetings to ascertain his interest and availability.***

* Two more churches have asked about membership of QCT: Indian Orthodox and the Metropolitan Community Church.
* The Faith and Unity Commission is revising some of the *Christian in Dialogue* kits. They have begun with ‘The Faith we Confess’. Revd Dr Clive Ayre is preparing material for a study kit on the Environment.
* Queensland Churches Together will celebrate it 20th Anniversary on 4th June. The plan is for this to be celebrated at St Peter’s Lutheran School Chapel – where the Inauguration was held.

***Anne will give us an up-date on this at our next meeting.***

***5.* WEBSITE:**

New items added to it:

* Report of the December 2010 Meeting – in the **Reports** page
* Sermon on ‘Reforming Saints’ by Robert Gribben –in the **Feature Item** page.
1. **EI NEWS:**

Edition 2 for 2010 of EI News arrived on 23rd December and was circulated on 27th December.

1. **CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES:**

Initiate conversations with Pentecostals? Meet together with a group of them for shared prayer and reflection? Conversation about school chaplaincy?

 ***Bruce to chat with Wayne Alcorn about this.***

* Wayne Alcorn is now the national leader of the AOG and John Hunt Leader of the AOG in Queensland. The rhetoric in relating to the AOG is that they are open to working together – but it’s not a big priority. In many local areas they work with other churches functionally. Bruce: “It is important that people of faith stand together in the face of rampant atheism.

**Anglican-Uniting Church Dialogue:** the Working Paper *A Covenant of Association,* has been endorsed by the Assembly Standing Committee. The Anglican General Synod requested that “copies of the affirmations and commitments be sent to the Doctrine Commission and the Dioceses for consideration, reporting back to General Synod Standing Committee by 31 December 2012.”

 In e-mail Correspondence with Revd Geoff Hoyte of the Anglican Committee for Ecumenical Relations, he suggested that their Committee meet with the SERC to talk about this – noting that the Working Paper is to be discussed in each Diocesan Council.

 We noted that the final decision-making is at the national level of the churches’ Standing Committees.

***Bruce agreed to meet with the Anglican Primate, Archbishop Philip Aspinall, to discuss the matter of a meeting of the two ecumenical relationships Committees.***

The Working Paper is in our website in the Dialogues Page.

***8. DATES FOR MEETINGS***

*Meetings of the SERC and SIRC commence at noon with a BYO lunch and conclude at about 3.00pm.*

**Dates of Meetings in 2011**

**April 7th**

**June 2nd**

**August 4th**

**October 6th**

**December 1st**

***Don Whebell***

Secretary

18 February 2011